

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric, in which a mat of filaments or of fibers which is in displacement, said filaments or fibers being composed of an organic material, is compacted in the direction of thickness at a point on its path of displacement, and the compacted mat is then consolidated into a consolidated mat, downstream at a consolidation station, characterized in that the displacement speed of the mat is reduced at the very point on its path of displacement where it is compacted and the mat is maintained by applying a vacuum to it between the point where it is compacted and the consolidation station.

2. (original) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the displacement speed of the mat is reduced by 5 to 50%.

3. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the thickness of the mat at compacting is reduced from 99% to 30%.

4. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the mat is wetted at compacting or just downstream of compacting.

5. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the mat is consolidated by causing it to pass through the consolidation station at the reduced speed.

6. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the mat is consolidated by hydraulic entanglement, by thermal binding, by chemical binding and/or by mechanical needling.

7. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the mat is a mat of filaments coming from a machine in hot-melt operation or a mat of fibers coming from a card for nonwoven fabrics or from a machine operating by air, known as air-laid operation.

Claim 8 (cancelled).

9. (currently amended) A machine for producing a nonwoven fabric, comprising a first element for delivering a mat to means ~~intended~~ for compacting it in the direction of thickness, characterized in that said means are also

means ~~intended~~ for reducing the displacement speed of the mat at the point where it is compacted, further including consolidating means for consolidating the mat, the consolidating means being arranged downstream of the compacting means in the direction of displacement of the mat, and vacuum means for maintaining the mat between the compacting means and the consolidation means by a vacuum.

10. (previously presented) The machine as claimed in claim 9, characterized in that the compacting and speed reduction means are implemented by the formation of a nipping point between the first element and another moveable element having a linear speed lower than that of the first element.

11. (currently amended) The machine as claimed in claim 10, characterized in that the other moveable element is a conveyor or a ~~second~~ cylinder.

12. (previously presented) The machine as claimed in claim 9, characterized by means intended for wetting the mat when it is being compacted or when it has just been compacted.

Claim 13 (cancelled).

14. (currently amended) The machine as claimed in claim ~~13~~ 9, characterized in that the consolidation means are arranged so as to consolidate the mat when it passes over ~~the other~~ another moveable element.

Claim 15 (cancelled).

16. (currently amended) The ~~use of a method or of a machine~~ as claimed in claim 1, ~~for reducing~~ wherein the step of reducing the displacement speed includes reducing the displacement speed in an amount sufficient to reduce the ratio of a property of a the nonwoven fabric in the length direction to this property in and the breadth direction.

17. (new) A method for producing a nonwoven fabric including a mat of organic filaments or organic fibers comprising the steps of providing a first movable element operable at a first linear speed for transporting the mat along a displacement path and another movable element operable at another linear speed for further transporting the mat along the displacement path, forming a nipping point between the first movable element and the another movable element, the another movable element being arranged above the first movable element, transporting the mat at a

displacement speed along the displacement path and through the nipping point, compacting the mat in the direction of thickness in the nipping point and reducing the displacement speed of the mat in the nipping point by operating the another movable element at a linear speed that is from about 5% to about 50% lower than that of the first movable element, consolidating the compacted mat at a downstream consolidation station to form a consolidated mat, and wetting the mat at compacting or just downstream of compacting.